

## INTRODUCTION

PRIOR to the great war Sir Charles Firth used to give from time to time a course of lectures on Macaulay's History of England. When he undertook the preparation of an illustrated edition of that work, published 1913-15 in six volumes by Messrs. Macmillan and Co., he began to revise his lectures in order to compile from them a commentary on the History. Unfortunately the task of revision was interrupted during the war and never resumed except to publish two articles, on Macaulay's Third Chapter<sup>1</sup> and Macaulay's Treatment of Scottish History,<sup>2</sup> which form chapters vi and viii of this book.

In a footnote to the latter article Sir Charles explained that it was

part of a series of lectures delivered at Oxford on Macaulay's History of England, Their object was not merely to criticise the statements made by Macaulay and the point of view adopted by him, but also to show the extent to which his conclusions had been invalidated or confirmed by later writers who had devoted their attention to particular parts of his subject, or by the new documentary materials published during the last sixty years. It was hoped thereby to encourage students to investigate the history of the period with an open mind, and to try to weave the new evidence into the tissue of the national story. Accordingly the notes indicate some of the recent monographs and publications of documents, though they do not profess to give an exhaustive list of them.

<sup>1</sup>I am indebted to the editor of History for permission to reprint this article substantially as it appeared in History, xvii, October, 1932.